

**THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC  
SAFETY ADMINISTRATION**

**TRAFFIC SAFETY PLAN  
FOR OLDER PERSONS**

**March 1993**

## PREFACE

In the mid-1980's, it became apparent that the problems facing older drivers, occupants, and pedestrians required increasing attention. Not only were the number of older Americans increasing more were driving and the incidence of injury and fatality resulting from motor vehicle crashes was increasing at a faster rate than the population growth. To address this problem the agency developed and published an action plan, "The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Traffic Safety Plan for Older Persons," in September 1988.

The research undertaken to implement the 1988 plan indicated that older drivers are overrepresented in crashes at intersections and during certain hours of the day, that they are underrepresented in crashes involving alcohol or speed, and that many older drivers tend to self-adjust their driving to accommodate any reduction in functional capacity. The results also showed that older driver safety problems are concentrated among older drivers who are either unaware of their difficulties or unable to make compensating adjustments to their driving. Included are drivers with peripheral vision problems that are not easily detectable with standard vision tests or those who cannot comprehend their difficulties, such as those with dementia. Similar problems were also uncovered in pedestrian safety. In addition, the research confirmed that drivers, passengers, or pedestrians over age 80 are more likely to be injured or killed in a crash than younger persons.

The 1990 census data showed that the rapid growth of the older population that initially triggered the agency's efforts to focus on older person traffic safety continued and if anything accelerated. From 1980 to 1990 the population over age 65 increased 20.9% while the general population grew by just 9.2% percent. While this difference is substantial, it will be overshadowed by changes projected by the U.S. Census Bureau for the future. For the decade from 2010 to 2020, the overall population increase is expected to be 8.2 percent, while the over 65 year old population is expected to grow by 35.1 percent!

In response to the continuing and growing older person traffic safety problem, the agency prepared this Traffic Safety Plan for Older Drivers. It describes major agency efforts in Problem Identification, Program Development, and Program Evaluation activities intended to improve the safety of older drivers, vehicle occupants, and pedestrians. It follows the information presented in "Addressing the Safety Issues Related to Younger and Older Drivers, A Report to Congress," February 1993.

As with earlier efforts, the projects summarized in this plan continue to involve other Department of Transportation agencies, including the Office of the Secretary of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration regarding projects in such areas as pedestrian safety, alternative transportation systems, and driver/highway interface. The plan also involves the highly specialized expertise found in other government agencies, including the National Institute on Aging, the Administration on Aging, and the Centers for Disease Control. In addition, NHTSA will continue to involve non-government organizations familiar with the needs and concerns of older persons as appropriate.

# CONTENTS

## *Problem Identification Projects*

1. Establish the Crash Risk for Specified Medical/Functional Conditions
2. Determine if Older Drivers Adequately Self-Regulate
3. Document the Mobility Consequences of Relinquishing the Driver License
4. Analyze Vehicle Crashworthiness for Older Occupants
5. Identify the Causes of Older Driver Intersection Crashes
6. Identify Barriers to Physician Referral of Patients for License Re-exam
7. Identify the Practical Problems with Family or Friends' Reporting of Suspected Diminished Driver Capacity
8. Identify Specific Vehicle Design Practices that Enhance Older Driver Crash Avoidance

## *Program Development Projects*

9. Develop Performance Assessment Techniques
10. Develop Ways to Meet Mobility Needs of Older Former Drivers
11. Develop Improved Intersection Negotiating Practices
12. Develop Empirical Guidelines for Medical Practitioners
13. Develop Materials for Use by Older Drivers in Making Their Driving Decisions
14. Develop Training and Information Programs
15. Consideration of Older Drivers in All Crash Avoidance Research
16. Develop Safety Information Materials and Safe Pedestrian Zones for Older Pedestrians

*Program Evaluation Projects*

17. Evaluate Driver License Re-examination Requirements
18. Evaluate NHTSA/American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) Model Driver Screening and Evaluation Program
19. Evaluate Medical and Community-Based Appraisal of Driving Limitations
20. Evaluate Programs that Maintain Former Driver Mobility













